# Fancy a cuddle? Join the club



Intimacy, long associated with physical closeness, particularly sex, is undergoing a shift in definition. For many, it now encapsulates emotional depth alongside physical connection. This transformation is made real thugh unique setups like the Gay Cuddle Club. This monthly gathering offers gay, bisexual, queer, and non-binary people a novel way to engage with physical intimacy: through non-sexual cuddling.

The club, inspired by the need for a deeper connection beyond fleeting sexual encounters, provides a safe space for attendees to explore what it means to touch and be touched with intention and gentleness. The initiative is spearheaded by a seasoned practitioner with two decades of experience in somatic healing, yoga, and massage. The club aims to decelerate and enrich the experience of physical touch often taken for granted.

A recent participant described their experiences at the club. Set in a serene atmosphere marked by yoga mats, candles, incense, and cushions, attendees are firstly invited to shed their shoes and socks—an act symbolising the shedding of daily life's rush and hustle. The session begins with a group meditation, easing participants into a relaxed state.

Notably diverse in age, the group participants hailing from various walks of life then circle up to introduce themselves and share their individual reasons for attending. The shared intentions often revolve around exploring a softer form of connection and rediscovering physical intimacy in a safe and respectful environment.

Participants are paired up and guided through a series of carefully choreographed positions, starting with something as simple as standing while a partner sits facing away, to more intimate forms like spooning and foot massages. Each touch is prefaced with verbal and non-verbal cues for consent, ensuring that boundaries are respected and acknowledged—an especially vital aspect for participants with past traumas.

One particularly poignant exercise involves partners standing nose-to-nose, simply looking into each other's eyes. This silent yet profoundly intimate act challenges many, highlighting the often-overlooked depth of non-verbal connection.

While sexual energy's potential emergence is acknowledged, the club maintains a non-sexual focus. Full clothing is required, and any arising sexual energy is discussed openly but not acted upon, allowing participants to navigate their feelings without shame.

This practice of platonic physical intimacy is not widely common in Western society, particularly among men, making the Gay Cuddle Club a pioneering effort. Participants leave the two-hour sessions feeling remarkably connected, despite minimal verbal communication.

Survivors of sexual violence have found particular benefit in these sessions. They describe the club as a space where they can reclaim their bodily autonomy, learning to comfortably give and retract consent, and form a healthier relationship with physical closeness.

The club brings a fresh perspective on intimacy. It demonstrates that physical connection does not have to equate to sexual desire but can be a fulfilling expression of affection and camaraderie. The lessons learned here often spill over into participants' daily lives, encouraging more open expressions of affection among friends.

For those looking to redefine and explore their understanding of intimacy, spaces like the Gay Cuddle Club offer not just a cuddle, but potentially a transformative experience of self-discovery and human connection.